

California Department of Public Health  
**California Community Water Fluoridation**

**FACT SHEET**



**Mission**

Promote oral health by reducing the prevalence of dental decay and tooth loss, periodontal disease, and other chronic diseases through prevention, education, and organized community efforts.

**Program Background**

The California Department of Public Health's (CDPH) California Community Water Fluoridation (CWF) program is dedicated to implementing community water fluoridation throughout California. The program is committed to reducing dental decay and tooth loss by continuing to provide leadership and facilitating collaboration and cooperation among public, private, and voluntary organizations. The program provides technical assistance, consultation and public and professional education to local communities that are interested in implementing and maintaining optimally fluoridated community water supplies. The program collaborates with the CDPH Drinking Water Program, to work with public water systems to fluoridate and maintain fluoridation at optimal levels. Additionally, the program coordinates fluoridation activities in the state with the Fluoridation Advisory Committee. The members represent fluoridation experts, public, private and voluntary organizations. The CWF program is housed in the Oral Health Unit, Chronic Disease and Injury Control Division.

Community water fluoridation is the safest, most effective and most economical public health intervention for reducing the epidemic of tooth decay. Almost all water contains some naturally occurring fluoride, but usually at levels too low to prevent tooth decay. The practice known as community water fluoridation is adjusting the fluoride concentration in the water supply to a level beneficial to reduce tooth decay and promote good oral health. Given the dramatic decline in tooth decay during the past 60 years, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) named water fluoridation one of [Ten Great Public Health Interventions of the 20th Century](#). Fluoridation is a good investment; it is estimated that for every dollar spent approximately thirty-eight dollars is saved in treatment costs.

For many years California ranked almost at the bottom in terms of state populations with access to fluoridation. With the passage of AB 733 in 1995, water systems with over 10,000 service connections are required to implement water fluoridation once funding is identified.

**Statistics**

Since the fluoridation program was initiated in the mid-1990s, the population of California citizens with access to fluoridated public drinking water has steadily risen.

- In 1994, only 17% of Californians received fluoridated water through their local water systems.
- The percentage of Californians receiving fluoridated water has increased significantly as a result of AB 733.



- By 2012, the percentage of Californians receiving fluoridated water has risen to 63.7%. The national goal is to increase the proportion of the U.S. population served by community water systems with optimally fluoridated water to 79.6% by 2020.

## **Benefits**

Water fluoridation prevents tooth decay mainly by providing teeth with frequent contact with low levels of fluoride throughout each day and throughout life. Even today, with other available sources of fluoride, studies show that water fluoridation reduces tooth decay by about 25 percent over a person's lifetime.

A person's income and ability to get routine dental care are not barriers since all residents of a community can enjoy fluoride's protective benefits just by drinking tap water and consuming foods and beverages prepared with it. This method of fluoride delivery benefits all people—regardless of age, income, education, or socioeconomic status.

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For further information and resources, please visit the [California Community Water Fluoridation](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/CommunityWaterFluoridation.aspx) website.

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